

Lesson 25

East Asia and the Pacific

DLO #1: Describe the major challenges to regional security in the PACOM region.

Ultimately, the US has many interest in the region:

- Protecting allies
- Preventing regional domination by a hegemon
- Controlling the spread of WMD
- Insuring open lanes of commerce
- Supporting peaceful change

Generally, the major challenge for US policy in the region, early in the 21st century, will be to deter/manage/contain the security conflicts in order to accommodate economic growth and political maturity. Dr. Buck Grinter(pp. 1)

1. Financial Crisis:

- ◆ **Slow-downs** in the modernization of Southeast Asian militaries,
- ◆ Reductions and cancellations in scope of some **training exercises**,
- ◆ Possible **reductions in funding** of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization,
- ◆ Pressure to reduce **host nation support**
- ◆ Could also lead to **instability** via civil disturbances, labor disputes, increased ethnic rivalries, and increase in anti-American rhetoric.

PACOM is striving to achieve a stable, prosperous, and democratic Asia-Pacific community in which the US is a player, partner, and beneficiary.

2. Security Alliance with Japan:

- ◆ Japan continues to host about 54,000 U.S. military personnel. Funding reductions in Japan's voluntary Facilities Improvement Program have had some **impact on U.S. military personnel in Okinawa**.
- ◆ Return of **Marine Corps Air Station Futenma** is a difficult and exceptionally complex challenge.

ensuring a continued alliance with Japan; the most important US security relationship in the region.

3. China:

- ◆ **Not a direct threat** to U.S. today.
- ◆ China recognizes the U.S. is committed to the peaceful resolution of **Taiwan issue**.
- ◆ China's role will also influence the outcome of issues related to the **South China Sea**, **Korean Peninsula**, and balanced management of **U.S.-China-Japan relations**.

Improve our military-to-military relationship with the People's Liberation Army of China.

4. Korean Peninsula:

- ◆ Volatile flashpoint; could directly affect **U.S. troops and citizens** from the first hour of conflict.
- ◆ **Deteriorating North Korean economy** may make North Korea more amenable to four-party talks aimed at formally ending the Korean War, and accelerate the recovery of unaccounted-for American servicemen.
- ◆ New ROK President, Kim Dae Jung, has voiced **support for U.S. military presence** in Korea; ROK has pledged to maintain host nation support.
- ◆ **Economic, political, and cultural differences** built up during fifty years of separation and mistrust will not be overcome easily.

Facilitate a non-cataclysmic end to the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

5. Readiness and OPTEMPO:

- ◆ **U.S. forward-deployed forces** in Asia remain the linchpin of regional security and stability. The U.S. should continue to maintain about 100,000 personnel - along with the capability this number demands - forward deployed. Readiness for deployed forces is being achieved at the expense of non-deployed forces.
- ◆ **PACOM has significant deficiencies** in six of the eight measured functional areas for a two major theater wars scenario 1) C⁴, 2) logistics and sustainment, 3) intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, 4) mobility, 5) infrastructure, and 6) special ops.
- ◆ **Personnel shortages** are the principal readiness concern especially:
 - ◆ forward-deployed naval force readiness
 - ◆ Air Force-wide decline in pilot retention and aircraft mission capable rates
 - ◆ U.S. Army shortfalls in infantrymen and low-density/high-demand specialties
 - ◆ U.S. Marine personnel in each major reporting unit

Engage in "Two major theater wars"

Question #1: What are the challenges facing PACOM? Will "engagement" improve or worsen U.S. opportunities to deal with the challenges?

- ◆ Readiness/OPTEMPO
 - maintain a state of "readiness to fight and win the nation's wars"
 - (a) ensuring a continued alliance with Japan; the most important US security relationship in the region.
 - (b) Improve our military-to-military relationship with the People's Liberation Army of China.
 - (c) Facilitate a non-cataclysmic end to the situation on the Korean Peninsula.
 - (d) Engage in "Two major theater wars"
- ◆ Capability improvements
- ◆ JTF-FA (Joint Task Force Full Accounting)
- ◆ Counterdrug efforts
- ◆ Peacetime engagement is a major strategy PACOM uses to help achieve stability in Asia. Peacetime engagement backed by credible, combat-ready forces provides the ability to respond to crises, prevent wars, and enhance stability. Examples:

- ◆ Joint Task Force Bevel Edge in Thailand: July 1997, possible evacuation of American citizens from Cambodia when fighting erupted between rival political factions. Approval for the operation was simplified and expedited due to a strong working relationship with Thai military.
- ◆ Air National Guard C-130s deployed to Indonesia to help fight fires. Navy medical personnel working with Indonesian public health authorities to help control outbreaks of Dengue fever.
- ◆ U.S. Navy access to Changi Naval Base pier in Singapore.
- ◆ Visiting Forces Agreement with Philippines.
- ◆ Strong alliance and vocal support from Australia.
- ◆ JTF-FA's mission with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia has helped pave the way for further engagement with Vietnam and Laos.

DLO #2: Describe the basic features of the seven post-Colonial revolutions that provide the sources of the new power in Asia.

1. Industrial Revolution:

- ◆ **Japan has led** the industrial revolution starting after WWII
- ◆ Asian economies grew 6% last year. By the year 2020, if growth continues at the same pace, **China will have the world's largest economy**, with Japan, India, Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand in top 10. (U.S. will be 2nd)
- ◆ **Foreign direct investment** in East Asia grew from \$1.3B in 1980 to \$42.7B in 1994.
- ◆ **Growth of nuclear energy** has slowed everywhere except in Asia where six of the world's seven new nuclear power plants were built in 1994 and 1995.

2. Political Revolution:

- ◆ **Democracy has spread** as economic progress has fostered middle-class communities that have formed centers of power - expanding middle classes will force governments to shed remnants of authoritarian rule. Seeking a stronger say in the political system.
- ◆ **Third-generation leaders** are mostly practicing politicians who seem to enjoy more public support and legitimacy than did leaders of the first two generations.

3. Demographic Revolution:

- ◆ **Asia is bubbling with people power**...the number of students between the ages of 12 and 17 enrolled in secondary school doubled or nearly doubled in many Asian nations between 1970 and 1992.
- ◆ **Improved public health** has reduced traditional Asian diseases such as cholera. Infant mortality rate in Japan is world's lowest while life expectancy is world's highest (79).

4. Green Revolution:

- ◆ Today, **most Asian nations grow enough food for themselves or can import it** with export earnings.
- ◆ Making more farmers owners of existing farms, opening more land to cultivation, and improved irrigation, fertilizers, and seed account for the increase.

5. Revolution in Nationalism:

- ◆ **Increased prosperity and economic achievement** are giving East Asian states greater national resilience, confidence, and self-assurance.
- ◆ Asians have been turning to religion as an expression of **patriotism**.
 - ◆ Hindu fundamentalism in India; Islam in Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan
- ◆ Asians are particularly alert to what they consider to be expressions of superiority by former colonial masters.

6. Revolution in Internationalism:

- ◆ **Advances in telecommunications** help to foster regional awareness - TV, radio, satellites, international travel opportunities.
 - ◆ **Regional groupings** such as ASEAN, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation have become more effective.
 - ◆ Australia and New Zealand have turned to the north to **trade more with Asian neighbors** than with America or Europe
- Trade among Asian nations has surpassed that with former colonial rulers ;

7. Revolution in Military Power:

- ◆ China became a regional military power in the 1960s and acquired nuclear weapons in 1964.
 - ◆ Most medium-sized Asian powers have expanded their armed forces and improved the quality of their weapons and equipment.
 - ◆ Defense spending decreased almost everywhere else in the world; in East Asia, **military spending went up** about 9% from 1992 to 1994.
 - ◆ **New armaments** are a source of national pride and provide a feeling of internal security.
- Asians have acquired military strength because economic progress has provided the funds.

Question #2: Of the seven revolutions, which are out of our reach and why?

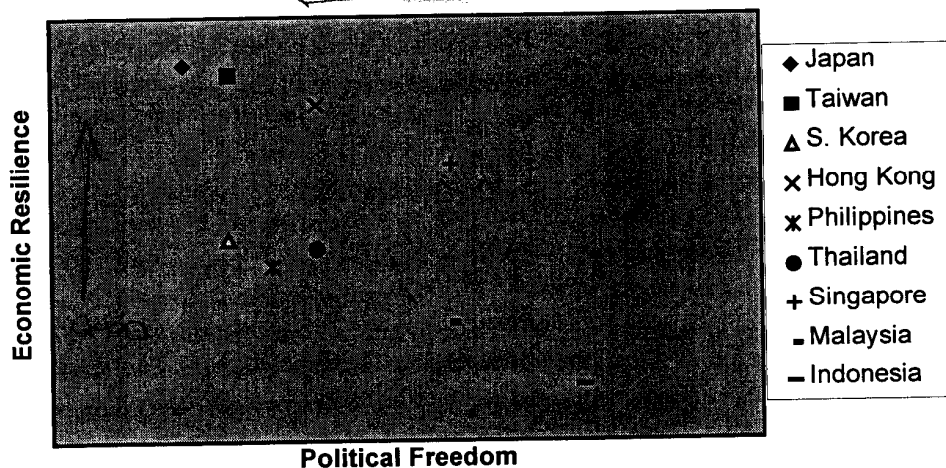
Demographic revolution - a population explosion in Asia that far exceeds that of the U.S. will be impossible for us to match, irrespective of the huge differences in educational and productive population demographics between Asia and the U.S.

DLO #3: Explain the relationship between the current Asian economic crisis and the development of liberal democracy in Asia.

- ◆ The Asian economic crisis has led many Asians to believe that **freer markets and freer politics** could have prevented the crisis in the first place, or at least mitigated its effects. Differing courses of the crisis in different countries did appear to support the prescription of political freedom as a cure for East Asia's economic problem. Three examples: **Taiwanese resistance, Thai and South Korean recoveries, and Indonesian collapse**.
 - ◆ **Taiwanese Resistance:** No major East Asian economy with a convertible currency was rattled less by the crisis than Taiwan - Bangkok's monetary index tracked consecutively the worst- and best-performing of 33 exchanges during the worst of the crisis.
 - ◆ **Thai and South Korean Recoveries:** In Thailand, without political freedom, the incompetent coalition government of Prime Minister Chavilit Yongchaiyudh could not

have been discredited - forcing his resignation and replacement with a more effective economic leader, Chuan Leekpai. A month later, South Korea's leaders changed too. Blame for the economy made incumbent President Kim Young Sam very unpopular. Thailand also changed constitutions making it impossible for anyone to serve as a member of parliament and the cabinet concurrently (preventing politicians from borrowing vast sums of money to buy votes, finagle cabinet posts after getting elected, then use the post to raise more under-the-table \$\$\$ to pay off their loans).

- ◆ Indonesian Collapse: Taiwan, Thailand, and South Korea have made big progress towards liberal democracy; Indonesia has not. Indonesia finished last in the race to exit the Asian crisis; none of 33 tracked markets performed worse than Jakarta's.
- ◆ Other things being equal, the economies best able to withstand the present crisis may prove to be those with more political freedom.



Question #3: Why is nepotism a recurring issue in Confucian societies? How can long-term economic goals be reached in light of billions in bad loans?

- ◆ Known as the "bane of East Asian countries"...
- ◆ Not all "Asian values" are constructive...nepotism is one of the weaknesses of Confucianism. **GOOD**
- ◆ Suharto's ties (Indonesia) to relatives and friends help to explain why he has vacillated in the face of IMF pressure to change the economy's opaque ways. Nepotism, cronyism, and corruption helped block the restoration of confidence and growth in Indonesia's economic recovery.
- ◆ Confucianism is often characterized as a system of **social and ethical philosophy** rather than a religion. In fact, Confucianism was built on an ancient religious foundation to establish the social values, institutions, and transcendent ideals of traditional Chinese society. It was what sociologist Robert Bellah called a "civil religion," the sense of religious identity and common moral understanding at the foundation of a society's central institutions. It is also what a Chinese sociologist called a "diffused religion"; **its institutions were not a separate church, but those of society, family, school, and state; its priests were not separate liturgical**

specialists, but parents, teachers, and officials. Confucianism was part of the Chinese social fabric and way of life; to Confucians, everyday life was the arena of religion.

- ◆ Thus one side of Confucianism was the affirmation of accepted values and norms of behavior in primary social institutions and basic human relationships. **All human relationships involved a set of defined roles and mutual obligations**; each participant should understand and conform to his/her proper role. **Starting from individual and family**, people acting rightly could reform and perfect the society.
- ◆ ...But now some of the sins laid at the doors of the region's economic systems look suspiciously like Asian values gone wrong. The attachment to the family becomes nepotism. The importance of personal relationships rather than formal legality becomes cronyism. Consensus becomes wheel-greasing and corrupt politics. Conservatism and respect for authority become rigidity and an inability to innovate. Much-vaunted educational achievements become rote-learning and a refusal to question those in authority.

DLO #4: Describe the fundamental problems threatening the future of the Japanese-American Alliance and list the possible policy implications that could arise from those problems.

- ◆ Fundamental Problems:
 - ◆ **Disagreement over the scope and purpose** of the alliance:
 - ◆ Now that the Cold War is over, the alliance has not adapted to changed circumstances.
 - ◆ If the Cold War turned hot, Japan's role was to bottle up the Soviet Pacific Fleet - now Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) purely defensive role are much less valuable to a U.S.-led coalition.
 - ◆ The **benefits of the alliance** have been undersold to the Japanese public and oversold to the American public. Not really an alliance but rather a **patron-client relationship** where the patron commits to the defense of the client and the client commits little in return.
 - ◆ U.S. interpretation of the alliance ^{hinges} ~~hedges~~ on Japan's willingness to provide support in regional contingencies.
 - ◆ Okinawa tension:
 - ◆ **Daily friction of hosting foreign troops on Japanese soil** is also straining the alliance.
 - ◆ American soldiers are reminded of their cool welcome, and of their own relative poverty, whenever they venture off their bases into the world's priciest consumer society.
 - ◆ As U.S. and Japanese defense budgets are squeezed smaller, funding for Japanese-based forward-deployments and burden-sharing may become probably targets for cuts.
 - ◆ Less war guilt:
 - ◆ Japan's guilt over WWII propagated the opinion "the world is a simple, safe place if somebody else makes all the tough choices and protects you if things go wrong."
 - ◆ Taboo on defense discussions lifted abruptly in 1990s.
 - ◆ **War guilt is an alien notion** to young Japanese citizens.

- ◆ Inciting actions from Beijing and Pyongyang remind Japanese citizens that they live in a rough neighborhood.
- ◆ Policy Implications:
 - ◆ Japanese political powers may use the debate over the alliance to force a fundamental change in Japan's national security strategy and do away with Japan's "politics as usual" that hinder a stronger alliance.
 - ◆ Distributive budgeting (placating policy differences with \$\$\$)
 - ◆ Bureaucratic delegation (politicians defer to officials on policy formulation)
 - ◆ Least-common-denominator consensus (avoiding hard choices to form a coalition)
 - ◆ U.S. isolationists are deeply suspicious of any military entanglements in Asia.
 - ◆ Revisionists don't like the fact that Japan gets a "free ride".
 - ◆ Sinocentric Asia strategists argue for a looser alliance with Japan since U.S. has far more at stake.
 - ◆ Alliance will a) either muddle through without a test or b) face 3 possible tests:
 - a) **No test of the alliance** will enable Tokyo to pursue a low-profile, UN-centered foreign policy; Japan would likely downplay the alliance when dealing with China; Japan could focus on confidence building under ASEAN. (However, if Japan gains a seat on the UN Security Council, they would likely have to ante up their share of peacekeeping military support.) Under this scenario, **the alliance would slowly erode...** due most likely to an accident or lurid crime by U.S. forces in Okinawa.
 - b) 3 tests would be: North Korea, 2nd Gulf War, China.
 - 1) **North Korea: Most likely test**, but easiest for alliance to weather since Japan would likely provide support (\$ and basing) rather than combat. If Japan does not provide its share of support in the case of a Korean conflict, the alliance would likely be destroyed. Japan's support role is essential...U.S. military would likely reduce its presence after unification especially if Japan failed to ante up.
 - 2) **2nd Gulf War:** Since expectations for Japanese support in a peacekeeping operation are low, Japan has the opportunity to play to its strengths in terms of nation-building and financial leverage in the test of a 2nd Gulf War. Failure on the part of Japan in this type of test has the **most room for slack** in its implication on the alliance. U.S. policy in the Middle East is sufficiently at odds with the strategy of Europe and Japan, not to mention China, that **the alliance may survive** less than stellar Japanese performance during a test of this nature.
 - 3) **China:** Even modest Japanese support for the U.S. in a military face-off with China would **trigger hostility and suspicion** in Beijing. **Failure** in the case of a China conflict **would destroy the alliance**.
 - ◆ The net effect on Japan's national security of a failed test would be **destruction of the alliance....Japan would be on its own**, providing its own defense with its own armed forces.

Question #4: Which alternative in terms of U.S./Japanese relations seems the most likely?

- ◆ A successful test of a Korean reunification conflict.

DLO #5: Describe the major economic, political, and security dimensions of near-term U.S.-Chinese relationships.

- ◆ Economic:
 - ◆ For China's governing parties, whether democratic or authoritarian, the ability to maintain continued national support still depends on the ability to maintain economic progress.
 - ◆ The pressures to maintain economic stability have **forced China to play an active role in the international economic system**. However, because many sectors of the economy remain noncompetitive, China's leaders also have adopted protectionist practices.
 - ◆ China favors open markets for its overseas exports and has expressed significant concern about any movement toward an international economic system that is based solely on the European, North American, and East Asian blocs.
 - ◆ **China will need significant amounts of foreign investment capital** if it is to avoid forced internal savings and a major slowdown in economic growth. In addition, to remain competitive in international trade, China will need continuing transfers of technology. The necessary improvements in economic and physical infrastructure will require financial assistance from foreign public and private sources.
- ◆ Security:
 - ◆ Security considerations have been particularly important because of China's central geographic position in Asia and the external pressures exerted on the nation throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.
 - ◆ In the 1950s, perceiving the U.S. as a threat to its survival, China aligned itself with Moscow for Soviet support for its economic and security interests. In the 1960s, though, China was forced to become more independent as Soviet support weakened, and the Cold War became firmly entrenched. During this decade, China achieved nuclear weapon capabilities and fought a successful border war with India. It expended huge capital and human resources to establish an invulnerable defensive capability deep in its interior - widely aware of its own vulnerability.
 - ◆ As the end of the 1960s approached, China's perceived threat shifted from the U.S. to the U.S.S.R. China then turned to U.S. for support and achieved a strategic alignment with U.S. during the 1970s.
 - ◆ The U.S.-China relationship peaked by the mid-80s. By the end of the Cold War, it became clear that in the absence of a potentially hostile Soviet Union, the strategic value of the U.S.-China alignment served little purpose.
 - ◆ China now believes more strongly in the **threat from a global system dominated by the U.S.** - a democratic country that might seek to end Communist Party rule. China will continue to focus its fears on the U.S. until it is confident that a new global security balance has been established - they see **their role as an equalizer** in the global balance of power.
 - ◆ China will likely focus on the following strategies: a closer relationship with Russia, improved relations with Europe, and the undoing of the U.S.-Japan alliance.
- ◆ Political:
 - ◆ Gradually, **China has managed to increase its influence in Asia** to the point where it can challenge Japan's influence in the region.
 - ◆ China has increased its role in the annual meetings of ASEAN.
 - ◆ China played a critical role in establishing the UN operation in Cambodia.

- ◆ Beijing plays an active role in maintaining relations with both North and South Korea.
- ◆ China is concerned that Japan, as a full member of the G-7, has the standing to claim an enhanced role in Asia.
- ◆ Chinese leaders see few or no international restrictions on export of military aircraft by U.S. and European countries, yet feel they must suffer numerous export restrictions.

Question #5: Does Chinese history dominate Chinese reality more than pragmatic and situational solutions?

- ◆ Yes! Playing an international role that is consistent with China's vision of its place in the world has been difficult for Beijing. Although China's leaders may have a deep appreciation of the country's history and culture, other international actors give little or not consideration to these factors.
- ◆ Chinese regimes since the decline of the 18th and 19th centuries have yearned to restore their country to greatness.
- ◆ At best, China has achieved status as a major regional power, holding limited roles in the global political, economic, and security spheres. This disconnect between the vision of China's role in the international system and the reality of its position adds to Beijing's hypersensitivity to pressures and perceived slights from the international community - especially any perceived interference in its internal affairs.

DLO #6: Explain the major security challenges for the U.S. in Northeast Asia relating to the future of the two Koreas, China and Taiwan.

- ◆ North and South Korea:
 - ◆ **DPRK military can still cause unacceptable damage** to the Greater Seoul area with its 11,000 forward-deployed artillery tubes, Scuds, and chemical weapons within one hundred kilometers of the DMZ.
 - ◆ **Continued deterioration of North Korea** as reflected in the floods and structural damage to its agriculture, food shortages, and six years of negative economic growth.
 - ◆ An absence of substantive progress in North-South reconciliation, in US-DPRK relations or Japan-DPRK relations.
 - ◆ **Tensions on the peninsula** have been intermittently increased, growing out of various North Korean provocations (sending troops into the DMZ) and the underlying residual distrust between the U.S. and the DPRK.
 - ◆ The U.S. is in the odd position of maintaining an economic embargo against the DPRK while Pyongyang is now the third largest U.S. aid recipient in Asia.
 - ◆ The absence of a larger strategy beyond the nuclear accord has allowed the DPRK to set the diplomatic agenda since 1993.
 - ◆ The **reunification process** appears **increasingly problematic**; it requires a rejuvenated DPRK economy of which there now appears little prospect.
 - ◆ The increasing danger is that as Pyongyang continues its slide towards oblivion some precipitous internal development will lead the political-military elite to conclude that absorption looms ahead and thus there is **nothing to lose** by initiating some desperate limited military action designed to take and hold territory.

- ◆ Korean reunification will almost certainly force a **significant alteration of the forward-deployed U.S. military presence** in the Asia-Pacific. If a U.S. withdrawal of forces from Korea were to occur, Japan would be the sole remaining host to U.S. forward-deployed forces in East Asia.
- ◆ Taiwan:
 - ◆ The Taiwan problem holds the potential to alter the East Asian balance.
 - ◆ **China's message is unmistakable:** formal Taiwanese independence is unacceptable and would trigger a military response.
 - ◆ If the U.S. did not come to Taipei's aid in the event of an invasion, it would raise profound doubts in the minds of allies as to the credibility of the American security umbrella – yet, a U.S. military response would force choices polarizing East Asia and put its alliances at risk – most notably, the U.S.-Japan alliance.
 - ◆ No Chinese leader could permit Taiwan to become fully independent and survive politically.
 - ◆ **Taipei's persistent quest for more international political space**, its diplomatic forays, and its desire for recognition of Taiwanese identity and success, is another variable in the equation.
 - ◆ So long as Washington and Beijing operate under the old assumptions, continued tension, periodic confrontation, and the risk of miscalculation will be almost inevitable. Nothing less than a new set of understandings between China and Taiwan – and expectations of both about the U.S. role – will create a stable equilibrium between China and Taiwan.
 - ◆ Until a decent interval (\approx 2010) after the reversion of Hong Kong to PRC sovereignty, no offer on the ultimate status of Taiwan will be credible in Taipei.
- ◆ China:
 - ◆ Largest external determinant of the other two relationships.
 - ◆ The **immediate possibility of U.S.-China confrontation** and longer-term question of coping with China as a military power, economic competitor, energy importer, and polluter poses broad challenges to the region and special concerns for managing the transformation of the Korean peninsula.
 - ◆ **China's national assertiveness** has become a dominant regional concern.
 - ◆ It is the first time in modern history that China and Japan have both emerged as major economic and geopolitical actors at the same time.
 - ◆ Four alternate futures toward which China may gravitate:
 1. China continues its long march of reform toward some type of constitutionalism.
 2. Renewed corporatist authoritarianism backed by nationalist appeal
 3. Degeneration toward a loose coalition of regional new-warlords
 4. Incorporating some aspects of rule of law with an authoritarian, collectivist state
 - ◆ Whichever outcome prevails, **nationalism is likely to be a major factor** shaping China's international behavior.

Question #6: If disorder is the norm, Korea must be normal, what is your prognosis for implosion and reunification?

While reunification is a likely possibility, it is not a foregone conclusion that reunification will automatically result in restaging of U.S. troops. Additionally, North Korea's fragile economic

and domestic status will require international support and rebuilding prior to a successful reunification.

DLO #7: Summarize the major security challenges in Southeast Asia in the late 1990s.

- Human Rights
- China threat
- Member's Paranoia

- ◆ Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, and Indonesia met in 1967 to form ASEAN in an attempt to lesson regional strife. **ASEAN's greatest achievement** is institutionalizing a **reconciliation process among members** and affording them some **international credibility**.
Asian's
- ◆ ASEAN armed forces are **freed from the burden of external defense**. Communist and ethnic insurgencies in ASEAN countries are without outside patrons. Bulk of ASEAN armed forces are stationed in small garrisons scattered throughout the countryside. Large army units are generally only found close to a capital or in regions with significant insurgent populations.
- ◆ Economic and political development are indispensable to internal stability. Consequently, the military endures defense budgets that are significantly lower than those of other countries.
- ◆ ASEAN's consistent security policies produced success at home: **Communist insurgencies failed** throughout most of Southeast Asia, internal stability and the growing competence of government institutions facilitated **spectacular economic growth**.
- ◆ The bedrock of ASEAN external security during the Cold War was the U.S. regional presence. Today, the U.S. engages its Southeast Asian counterparts in negotiations concerning **human rights and trade** with little consideration of the security issues. Consequently, ASEAN leaders fear that the U.S. might establish human rights reform as a condition for trade, investment, or military assistance.
- ◆ Another challenge that has changed with the end of the Cold War is the challenge posed by China. Since the mid-1980s China has asserted itself strongly in the region. China's South China Sea claim in 1992 made neighbors of each of the ASEAN countries. This penchant for unilateral seizures of islands and reefs has provoked considerable consternation in ASEAN capitals.
- ◆ The last, but not least, security threat to ASEAN is the members themselves. An **underlying distrust among ASEAN members** inhibits all but rudimentary regional security agreements. ASEAN governments often purchase weapons based on political considerations rather than military necessity. Every new arms purchase by an ASEAN member raises the specter of a **regional arms race**, aggravates the stresses within ASEAN, and tends to inhibit substantive military cooperation.
- ◆ Should ASEAN governments choose to move from a policy of regime security to one of national defense, they clearly have the capability to develop respectable means of military deterrence.

Question #7: If disorder and strategy in Southeast Asia is guided by the inertia of the last 30 years, what chance of change is there?

- ◆ The countries of ASEAN have already come a long way economically and politically – continued economic growth could provide the confidence to change security policy and political style.